

Of an Oath.

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A
SHORT ACCOUNT
OF THE
NATURE AND OBLIGATION
OF AN

O A T H,

AND THE
DREADFUL CONSEQUENCES OF
PERJURY

IN THIS WORLD AND IN THAT WHICH
IS TO COME.

BY THE REV. D. G.

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TO THE
RIGHT HONOURABLE
LLOYD LORD KENYON,
LORD CHIEF JUSTICE OF ENGLAND, &c.

MY LORD,

THE very exalted station which you so eminently fill, dispensing the justice of your country, and guarding the rights and morals of the people; the uniform anxiety which you discover to repress vice, to detect and punish falsehood, and to advance truth and justice; and the many other public and private virtues which adorn your character, all concur in pointing to your Lordship as the proper patron of the present attempt.

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The gross ignorance of many among the lower orders of society, has long been a national disgrace, and the cause of serious complaint; and there is no subject upon which this ignorance is more apparent or more injurious, than upon the nature of that most solemn of all obligations, an oath.

I was led to consider this subject by the following circumstance:—I was present at the assizes for the county of ———, when a man was tried for a most horrid murder. A witness of the age of sixteen was produced, who had been examined before the Coroner, and whose deposition contained very important matter indeed, to prove the charge against the person accused; but, upon enquiry, it appeared that this young man was so entirely ignorant

of the nature and obligation of an oath, that the learned and humane Judge did not think it proper to examine him. His Lordship lamented, very pathetically, the extreme ignorance of the common people as to the nature of this solemn obligation; and recommended it as a subject worthy the attention of the patrons of those excellent charitable institutions, which have been established in many districts of the country, for the instruction of the poor.

It has been my design, my Lord, to assist in furnishing the poor with the means of acquiring this important and useful knowledge; I have endeavoured to render the subject plain and easy, to adapt it to the meanest capacities, and the

most tender years, and to compress it into a compass that may not overburthen the memory. I would indulge myself in the pleasing hope, that it may conduce, in some degree, however small, to the public advantage. Much of its usefulness will be derived from the protection, which, with your usual liberality, your Lordship has been pleased to afford it.

I have the honour to be,

with the most profound respect,

MY LORD,

your Lordship's devoted and
obliged humble servant,

D. G.

13th April, 1789.

LORD

LORD who shall dwell in thy
tabernacle, and rest upon thy
holy hill? He that speaketh the
TRUTH from his heart, and
hath used no deceit with his
tongue. *Psalms xv.*

The lip of TRUTH shall be esta-
blished for ever: but a lying
tongue is but for a moment.
Prov. xii. 19.

Thou shalt not take the name of
the Lord thy God in vain.

THOU SHALT NOT BEAR FALSE
WITNESS. *Commandments.*

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A false witness shall not be unpunished: and he that speaketh LIES shall not escape.

Prov. xix. 5.

If a false witness rise up against any man, and testify against his brother that which is wrong; then shall ye do unto him, as he had thought to have done unto his brother. *Deut. xix. 16. 21.*

Q. WHAT

Q. *WHAT* is the nature of an oath?

A. An oath is a solemn appeal to Almighty God, by which, laying my hand upon the book of his holy Gospels, I publicly declare that I know myself to be in his presence, and that he knows, and is a witness to what I speak.

Q. *What*

Q. What do you undertake to do, when you make this solemn appeal?

A. I undertake and promise, in the presence of God, who is the God of truth, and who knows the secrets of all hearts; that I will declare the truth from the bottom of my heart; that I will tell all that I know; that I will not conceal any thing; and that I will not say one word more than the truth.

Q. What is taking a false oath, or being guilty of perjury?

A. I am guilty of the horrid crime of false swearing, or perjury, whenever, being sworn, I say any thing that is false, or which I do

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not

not know to be true, or when I conceal any thing that I know on the matter upon which I am sworn, or whenever I try to mislead or impose upon those before whom I am examined.

Q. What injury may your false swearing do to your neighbour?

A. It may be the means of taking away his life, his liberty, or his property, it may deprive him of his good name, or, at the least, it may hinder him in the recovering something that is justly due to him.

Q. What

Q. What will happen to yourself in this world, if you swear falsely?

A. I shall be severely punished by imprisonment, and exposed in the pillory; I shall be deemed infamous, and can never afterwards be examined as a witness, either for myself or others; I shall be shunned and despised as a dangerous and bad man, tormented with an evil conscience, and deprived of all the comforts and enjoyments of the world; or I shall be transported from this happy country, and if I should return, shall suffer a shameful death as a common felon.

Q. What

Q. What will happen to you in the world to come if you swear falsely?

A. I shall be driven from the presence of my God, and from all the joys of heaven; and shall receive that dreadful sentence, which, at the last day, the Judge of heaven and earth shall pronounce to those on his left hand, saying, “DEPART FROM ME,
“YE CURSED, INTO EVER-
“LASTING FIRE, PREPARED
“FOR THE DEVIL AND HIS
“ANGELS.”

F I N I S.

